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EDUCATION AND WORK IN THE ARGENTINEAN PEDAGOGICAL FIELD

Maria Eugenia Vicente*

Argentina

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at contributing to the link between education and work in the Argentinean pedagogical field by means of a reconstruction of the structural modifications of the professional characteristics in the last forty years of Education Sciences Degree. The analysis suggests that the reconfiguration of the link between education and work in Education Sciences gives rise to other ways and conditions of knowledge production in the pedagogical field. These new characteristics have enabled progress on those conceptions that recognize Education Sciences as fragmented, hybrid and unstructured.

Key words:

Education and work – Education
Sciences – pedagogical field-
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INTRODUCTION

The formation of Education Sciences, as modern profession, was fostered by the change in three main traditional social processes: objectification of knowledge, ways of reproduction and specialization of knowledge (Tenti Fanfani and Gómez, 1990)

Before the formation of capitalist societies, the way of doing things and the sense of life were not objectified in texts or systematic speeches. Knowledge production and learning how to produce knowledge were learnt at the same time, at the same moment and with the same agents. It was about a knowledge that tended to circularity and reiteration of the same formulas and the same solutions. Thus, specialists or professionals in a broad sense did not exist and therefore neither exist education professionals.

However, the complexity of the social tasks demanded a more varied and complex set of knowledge for its solution. Writing enabled the objectification of social knowledge since it transcended the limits of a person and an individual life and it gathered knowledge outside the minds of the actors. Furthermore, the text allowed an easy circulation of produced knowledge and thus facilitated the task of comparison and review among different knowledge and producers of knowledge.

Along with the objectification of knowledge, a transformation in the ways of reproduction and transmission of knowledge was produced by means of a method or procedure, relatively codified, responding to a means-end rationality. Then, learning formalized knowledge did not happen spontaneously, but it was a subject of calculus and planning. With this, teaching was

transformed into a specific practice, implementing adequate means to the purpose of training.

In this sense, the specialization of knowledge accompanied the processes of training and specialization. The objectified knowledge was not spontaneously learnt at any time and place; it required a specific experience organized in the core of specialized institutions: the schools. At the same time, and unlike practical knowledge that was accredited by its own exercise or by the achieved results, rationalized knowledge was guaranteed by a degree or certification whose value was independent from the real knowledge the individual possessed. In this context, training became the task of specialists and professionals, giving birth to a very specific knowledge: Pedagogy (the theory and practice of teaching), the subject of study of Education Sciences. In this regard, Novoa maintains, 'it is knowledge applied in the professional training of teachers and will serve to justify the position of experts and the monopoly of intervention in the education field' (1998:250)

In Argentina, the concerns regarding the university training of education professionals which addressed the incipient national education system were formalized in 1914 in the University of La Plata with the creation of the College of Education Sciences. Based on a scientific model, the College offered the degrees in primary, secondary, teacher training, special, music and drawing teaching (Southwell, 2003). In this way, the formation of professionals in Education Sciences is related to the need of dealing with teaching for the public school systems of national level, keeping those professionals linked to work within the scholar frame: teacher training and research. (Armengol, 2005) Over time, the work of Romani and Zaragoza (2008) in Spain, Navarrete Cazales (2008) in Mexico, and Brusilovsky (1970) and Carlino (1997) and Villa, *et al.* (2009) in Argentina

*Corresponding author: Maria Eugenia Vicente
Argentina

showed the social transformations which occurred in the professional field of Education Sciences in the last forty years. As from 1970's, Education Sciences are separated from the education system as the main option of professional practice, presenting diverse academic interests (Navarrete Cazales, 2008). In the last years, the areas of work of the Education Sciences graduate were diversified so they can practice the profession in different scenarios, not only in the formal education but also in formal and informal scenarios¹ such as companies, adult education, and consultancies, among others. (Carlino, 1997, Villa *et al.*, 2009)

In this way, 'the specific field of Education Sciences has historically been built as a branch of the education system, of the profession of education itself' (Tesla and Spinosa, 2009:96). In this regard, Bourdieu and Wacquant (2005) point out that each field calls and gives life to a specific form of interest, under the shape of a tacit acknowledgement of the value of the issues at stake and the practical mastery of its rules. Moreover, this implicit specific interest for participating differs according to the position and work career that led each participant to their positions. So, what specific interests do the professional field of Education Sciences encompass after diversification of its professional work environments? How does this affect the positions, relations and socio-professional practices of graduates? Different authors (Furlán, 1989; Furlán and Pasillas, 1993; Fernández, 1989; Coria and Edelstein, 1993; Tenti Fanfani, 1984; Villa, 2011) provided answers in relation to employability as well as to the training of professionals in the Education Sciences.

In relation to employability, Furlán (1989) questions the reinvention in different environments of work outside those places the profession was originated for and points out the fact that the creation of curricula in universities to train graduates in Education Sciences generated a group of professionals with different kinds of pedagogical speeches who, having not a fixed working area, frequently ask themselves about their identity. The author states that this happens when the training curriculum is removed from the "natural" place of reproduction, the teacher training school.

In relation to training of professionals in Education Sciences, it is recognized that a pedagogy that is disentangled from the school task and distant from its normative function is related to the aspiration that the university gives it the air of science that it could not built. However, a constant sense of extraterritoriality has prevailed among graduate pedagogues.

Within this framework, the present article aims at developing an analysis about the characteristics of the professional field in Education Sciences which arise from the structural modifications in the field during the last forty years. For this purpose, a historical review is made throughout the history of Education Sciences in the National University of La Plata (UNLP), institution where the pedagogical university degree is founded in Argentina. Finally, there is a vision of the conceptualization of the profession in Education Sciences based on current profile of graduates.

Development: Changes in the professional field of Education Sciences

First stage: Emergence

In 1914, the first College of Education Sciences is inaugurated in Argentina initiating the superior teaching of these sciences. The opening inaugurated a relevant academic area for the training of university teachers in the Educational and Pedagogical Sciences based on scientific research (Alí Jafella, 2007). In the college, the scientific-experimental field in education was promoted by Victor Mercante, and between 1914 and 1920, during his deanship, curricula clearly oriented to that direction were developed.

'The new College, which aspires to give the schools of the country teachersowing science and method that make their action efficient without compromising misguided trials, the soul dedicated to youth, has a position in the University that enables to solve problems thanks to correlation of teaching. (...) Education Sciences that, according to the philosopher Montpellier, crown the rest of the sciences, is, in this vast field of studies where they will find the vitality which will nurture them and the principles which will free them from the destabilizing and demoralizing sophism' (Regulation and Curriculum of Education Sciences College: 1915, p. 4).

With these coordinates, the College offered the degrees in Secondary Teaching, Teacher Training and Special Teaching in the following specializations: Pedagogy and Related Sciences, Philosophy and Literature, History and Geography, Argentinean History and Legal and Social Institutions, Math, Physics, Chemistry, Natural Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Anatomy, Physiology and Hygiene, Drawing for primary teaching and Music (Finocchio, 2001).

In 1920 the College changed its name to the current Humanities and Education Sciences. During the 1930's and 1940's, the course developed toward a philosophical level, but it did not completely abandon the experimental field. In the 1940's, the College of Humanities had completed changed: the experimental psychology applied to education occupied a marginal place, and most of the teachers who had been incorporated in the 20's and 30's had a more philosophical or humanistic orientation (Southwell, 2014).

In 1950, the course was renamed as Philosophy and Education Sciences. In 1953 precisely, Pedagogy is separated from Philosophy because of the creation of the Institute of Pedagogy. Some years later, in 1959, based on this Institute, the Department of Education Sciences is created. It is responsible for the degree in Pedagogy and the Laboratory of Psychopedagogical Research. This year the name of Education Sciences is again established.

Second Stage: Revitalization

By the end of the 1950's, the developmental strategy of social modernization through the State aspired to transform the economic structure and the socio-political matrix shaped in the previous decades. These attempts of modernization were manifested in the different stages of the Argentinean education system (Suasnabar y Palamidessi, 2007) and as a consequence a tendency to educative reforms in Latin America was configured. This tendency was known as Developmental Pedagogy. Within this context, the function of education in the social model was justified. It was conceived as a highly profitable investment, the way that guaranteed a development

¹According to Sirvent (2006) the 'formal' area of insertion refers to the initial education that comprises all graduate, structured, systematized experiences with a highly educative intentionality. On the other hand, 'non-formal' refers to young and adults education not belonging to initial education but to social learning; that is, not structured which is produced throughout the individual life and also groups.

model, mainly as a tool to prepare human resources (Southwell, 2003a; Novoa, 1998). These educational policies were adopted in the context of a key milestone in the history of the Argentinean scholarship when, in the middle of the 20th century, a massive expansion of the level of scholarship was taking place (Southwell, 2003a). In this context, managing education was one of the essential tasks for the purpose of organizing, controlling and sustaining the expansive wave of the mass of scholars that demanded public instruction within the framework of developmental social and economic ideas. In this way, the 1960's were constituted as the peak of the technopedagogical organisms and of weight in the definition of policies.

In this context, Education Sciences went through a period of revitalization, oriented to strengthen the scientific dimension of the educative practices and contribute to the design of a country in process of developmental modernization (Morgade, 2007). For this reason, the Education Sciences were institutionally strengthened by means of the foundation of homonym departments in different universities. In the UNLP, in 1959 the course became independent of philosophy when Calcagno created the Department of Education Sciences and also the course of Pedagogy changed its name to Education Sciences. The same happened in UBA (University of Buenos Aires) where, in 1957, the Education Sciences course was founded. Its origin was the Institute of Didactics founded in 1927 that was in charge of the organization and lecture of subjects in the area (*Idem*)

The transformation of the old Pedagogical Teaching courses into the new courses of Education Sciences marked the emergence of a new agent in the educational field, the specialist in education. Different from the birth period, the profile of "humanist pedagogue" that expressed the generalist matrix was replaced by the "specialist in education" that, in principle, based its legitimacy in the systematic empiric knowledge and the technical expertise (Suasnabar and Palamidessi, 2007). Education Sciences specialists trained in knowledge and techniques resulting from the development of research in scientific disciplines would be the "stable technicians" capable of providing the "technical-pedagogical organisms" destined for research and educational decision making (Tavella, in Garate, 2012). Thus, in this second stage, the professional field of Education Sciences was constituted in three spaces: teaching, research and educational management.

Third Stage: Inestability

Towards the end of 1960's and the beginning of 1970's, the most economic dimension was developed to the detriment of those dimensions closely linked to social integration. It was particularly related to the rising tide of authoritarianism, arbitrariness and institutional instability (Southwell, 2003b). In 1976, the military dictatorship signaled the beginning of a period marked by repression, freezing of political-educational debate and de-structuring of the modernizing projects. The "Process of National Reorganization" (PRN) aimed at disciplining the political and social behaviors by means of the instauration of a militarized State and the opening of markets. During the period 1976-1982, education was an unstable area of government with a clear influence on the pedagogical objectives which were unified with the aspiration of order. In this period, a structured educational project beyond the idea of repression of the previous situation cannot be observed. The pedagogical conception of the military intervention was a

contradictory articulation between transcendent individual values linked to the stamp of catholic nationalism and the concern about order. According to the interpretation of the regime, the situation up to 1976 had been a process of social disintegration and spiritual crisis.

During this period, the processes of differentiation, modernization, and professionalization of the state functions were deeply affected. Technical tables were lost, and technical organisms previously created were fused, replaced or dismantled. In the university, disappearance, expulsion and exile of teachers, prohibition of books and the ideological control outlined the central features that the de-structuring process assumed. (Suasnabar and Palamidessi, 2007; Isola, 2013)

Middle and higher teaching was a practice maintained since the beginning of the career, surely paying attention to teaching job division: teachers would give classes at primary level and Education Sciences graduates would teach in the middle and higher levels. In relation to teachers training, teaching in a tertiary level was presented as a strategy to balance the teaching market. Thus, in 1969, the training of teachers turned from being a higher level training (Teacher Training School) to a tertiary level course (Elementary School Teaching Degree), adding more training years to those aspiring to be teachers (Pineau, 2012). In this respect, the opening of this stage in the teaching course in a tertiary level contributed to the consolidation of the presence of Education Sciences graduates in that level, increasing the tendency the following years.

Regarding the research practice, since 1914, the scientific training that dates from Education Sciences College curricula has shown the determination to consider education as a science in the university by means of the experimental method. However, the military dictatorship in 1976 found the academic profession of education with an incomplete process of professionalization, professionals in exile and decimated institutions (Isola, 2013). This situation caused a decline in the profession of Education Sciences in the research area, which would be maintained the following years.

Fourth Stage: Diversification

During the 1980's, a recovery process of democratic government regime took place. It was aimed at modifying the prevailing development model and initiating a re-structuration process of the economy which tended to incorporate the region to the global exchange flow of goods and services (Tiramonti, 1997). Between 1983 and 1986, the government of Alfonsín fixed the period for university normalization and institutional autonomy restoration (Paso, 2011). From these coordinates, one of the main lines of work of the College of Humanities and Education Sciences of UNLP was the modification of curricula. But in the late 1980's, the hyperinflationary experiences caused the fall of the government of Alfonsín. From then on a package of policies was unfolded in the country which can be generically characterized as neoliberal, consisting in the privatization of most services and exploitations that up to that moment were state-owned. In this context, Argentina implemented an education reform which aimed at modifying the educational system both its structure and content, organization and the relation with the state apparatus (Tiramonti, 2005). The educational policies carried out were directly related to the transfer process of tertiary and middle schools to jurisdictions. To this end, two laws are passed, in

1991 the Establishment Transfer of Middle and Higher Level Act and in 1993, the Federal Education Act. The compliance with the Transfer Act implied a higher budgetary charge for the provincial administration and one of the most significant consequences of the transfer has been the acceleration of the process of internal fragmentation of the national education system (Filmus, 1997; Feldfeber e Ivanier, 2003; Krischesky, 2012). The demand for services transferring arises closely linked to the claims of a true federalism and a greater autonomy of the provinces facing a power that mainly responded to the economic sectors linked to the agro export model centered in the port of Buenos Aires.

Decentralization was considered by the educational community actors as a mechanism which would finish with bureaucratization of the system, overcome the overlapping of jurisdictions, articulate the actions with the establishments historically dependent on the provinces and adapt management styles, contents and institutional modalities to the local realities. At the same time, local communities would broaden their participation possibilities in education management assuming greater commitment.

In reality, this process did not mean a broadening of possibilities of community participation in schools or the emergence of innovative processes by actors' initiative. It neither enabled service improvement. The neglect of the National State and the inequality of regional situations caused the deepening of education segmentation. At the same time, in relation to teaching professionalization proposals, the instrumental logic that oriented training was designed beyond problems teachers and institutions daily faced. Teachers considered the speech of autonomy as a transfer of responsibilities and not as a real possibility for intervening in the political decisions they were involved in.

In this context, the field of Education Sciences during the period that begins with the democratic reorganization of the Argentinean society from 1983 to 1999 maintained some working area and new areas were added. Regarding the traditional areas such as teaching, graduates were displaced from higher level teaching and were mainly assembled in the tertiary level and in the university.

At the same time, the education management that had gained presence in the field since the middle of the twentieth century with the need of incorporating pedagogical technical tables in the state administration was maintained. The State continued coopting Education Sciences professionals who would fulfill technical roles in the government and face the new challenges that the discipline process of the old "Educators Corporation" imposed, but in accordance with the new control parameters (Nardowsky, 1997).

A new area emerged during the 1980's; it was the pedagogical assessment in the so called university academic units whose demand gave rise to the production of an alternative speech about how teaching actions should be unfolded. Education Sciences graduate would be an authorized subject to say, question, suggest, think about the ideal in relation to the ways of knowledge transmission, forms of assessment, etc. The graduate would be the holder of knowledge enabled to question others practices (Edelstein, 1999).

Well into the 1990's, Education Sciences professionals had gained strength in areas where previously had little influence, such as in teacher training, curriculum reformulation or

assessment. Training in companies was also an area that emerged strongly in 1990's, mergers, sales and the restructuration of goods and services companies demanded the professional practice of Education Sciences to deal with employee training in order to adapt to the new organizational logics.

Fifth Stage: of consolidation

Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, by means of the Technical Education Act, the Education Financing Act and the National Education Act, Kirchner's government demonstrated good will to introduce a greater coordination in an educational scenario dominated by disarticulation. In this respect, the government clearly stated the need to construct tools in lines with the consolidation of a productive country model (Chiroleu y Iazzeta, 2012).

In relation to teaching training, the National Institute for Teacher Training was created in 2006. Its main functions are planning and implementation of initial and continuing teacher training policies, strengthening of the relation between the training system and the education system, curriculum development, research, among others.

In relation to the University, an evident symbolic acknowledgment and a sustained increase in financing took place in the context of a friendly and relaxed relation (*Idem*). In short, the educational scenario of the period 2000-2015 is characterized by a repositioning of higher level education and teaching training level.

In the last decade, the professional field of Education Sciences is mainly composed by the following professional practices: teaching in university and in teacher training institutes, education management, pedagogical advice both in the education system and civil society environments in general, and teachers in neighborhoods, museums, non-governmental organizations, hospitals, prisons (Vicente, 2012). As it can be observed, the current professional practices in the field throughout 2000 and 2015 broadened the recipient profiles and the contexts outside educative institutions.

CONCLUSIONS

After the review throughout the different professional practices of Education Sciences graduates, the following question arises: *Why talking about pedagogical action and not particularly about teaching and education research as the foundation of this profession indicates?* This question can be answered from different perspectives.

In the first place, because there is greater presence of Education Sciences in the social arena which is expressed in the scope broadening of the profession, this is translated into a diversity of recipients and institutions. The professional practice of Education Sciences graduates recognized as teaching training and research reduces the areas of work to teaching in the university and institutions, paying attention to the educative processes that are developed within scholar or academic frameworks, area aimed at contributions from research carried out in the university. For its part, pedagogical action is not only constituted from teaching training practices and research but also from planning and assessment of education public policies, advice on processes and institutional management programs, design of science popularization programs, attendance and training about social problems in contexts of vulnerability.

In the second place, because there is a change in the conception of the social function of education.

At the beginning of the profession of Education Sciences, its professional practices were supposed to have the function of providing to education processes from the higher level of instruction, specialization of professional groups in the education field. Presently, the function of the professional practice is oriented to accompaniment, improvement and emancipation of diverse actors or social groups in different contexts and embedded in multiple problems or social, cultural and territorial situations. In this sense of social function of Education Sciences, the graduate is put aside the role of specialist trained in an academy to decenter and act from a position of facilitator of life and conditions improvement of social groups, from the education field.

In the third place, because there exist new ways of knowledge production in the field. As previously exposed, at the beginning of the profession, the production of knowledge consisted on the theoretical and methodological contributions to the scholar processes deriving from research in the university. At present, this way of producing knowledge is one among others, since the didactic and training support materials, institutional and classroom planning, institutional rules design, institutional accreditation reports, curriculum documents design, are products of a process of delimitation and organization of the object, resourcing, data source analysis, analysis revision, reflection on results and diagnosis. In this regard, the pedagogical action, in general, introduces other ways and conditions of knowledge production in the education field. The conditions have to do with the fact that such production is not carried out in centers, institutes or academic departments but in varied scenarios depending on the environment where Education Sciences graduates are embedded. Where pedagogical action takes place, there is research process to develop. Furthermore, another difference is the centrality given to the processes of research since the professional group carrying out the education action is not organized around a research project but around varied social and educative objectives and it is the research process that is put at stake in order to achieve the educational proposals that serve such objectives.

As regard the ways of publication and communication of knowledge, and according to the distinction between formal and informal mechanisms (Hångstrom in Palamidessi and Devetac, 2007), the first make reference to specialized periodicals, books, communications in congresses and research reports, papers and work documents. These publications and forms of knowledge socialization typical of academic field live together, at present, with other forms of producing and communicating knowledge, elaborated in the different areas where pedagogical action is developed and that is socialized in the community in general, including the education community. The informal mechanisms of knowledge production mainly refer to the flexibility in the rules for producing and communicating knowledge. Productions include the official publications of the Education Ministry such as curriculum design, rules, teaching training material, and didactic material to work in the classroom as well as institutional documents such as diagnosis reports and educational process monitoring or institutions subjects, educative projects, institutional improvement proposals, curricula, among others. The wide range of publications include productions such as guided visit to cultural centers, road maps,

didactic orientation to work in recreational areas, newspapers, community educative experience chronicles, among others. Documenting the socio-educative practices in the form of publications is a way to objectify knowledge and so it can be transmitted, read, commented, and reformulated; in this dynamic, it contributes to the education field.

In the fourth place, because the profile of the Education Sciences graduate was modified. Throughout the history of the professional field, there was a change from a scientific profile to a more heterogeneous profile. This means, at the beginning, graduates were trained to contribute to scholar education with instruments and theories that were originated in the experimental production of pedology. In this regard, it is understood that Education Sciences professional were constituted in "education scientists". As it was noticed throughout history, graduates were progressively embedded in areas outside scholar environment and training was expanded from graduates scientific contributions in the education system towards a profile oriented to pedagogical advice in different environments, training teachers and workers in the different sectors of production, construction of educative centers in museums, hospitals, libraries, etc. Thus, from the scientific profile dedicated to teachers training, it was constituted a more plural profile in terms of practice, recipients, scope and assumptions.

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